

Consultation Response Form

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Question 1: The Strategy sets out the areas we will prioritise in planning for our ageing society and why. Have we prioritised the right areas?

Comments:

The aims outlined here seem appropriate to us.

Question 2: Are there any issues that are not reflected in the Strategy that you think should be considered when planning for an ageing society?

Comments:

Speaking specifically about people with a learning disability, one recurring theme is to enable participation in wider society on equal footing with everyone else. While we acknowledge that many of the proposals in this document already lead towards this goal, we would like to see this embedded as a stronger principle.

Question 3: Have we identified the key policies and mechanisms that can deliver real change in the lives of older people today and future generations?

Comments:

In terms of relevant policies, in addition to the mentioned policies, it would be good to link this strategy to the Learning Disability: Improving Lives Program (2018). Within the Improving Lives Program there is a special section which looks specifically at the needs of older people with a learning disability including identifying risk and protective factors (pp.12-13).

Question 4: Does the content amount to a sufficiently ambitious response to the major public policy issue of our ageing society?

Comments:

In order to improve the situation of older people in Wales it is important to make sure the best support is offered to older people who also have other protected characteristics. We recognise that plans in this proposal make very significant steps to do this and welcome support being targeted at deprived areas and within Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

Health Inequalities

In terms of older people with learning disabilities, it is important to look at their specific needs as they grow older as well as the reasons why they tend to die so much younger than the general population. UK-wide data shows that women with a learning disability tend to die 18 years earlier and men with a learning disability 14 years earlier than people without a learning disability (Mencap 2018). Covid-19 has exaggerated existing health inequalities and urgent action is needed in order to avoid further harm (Williams 2021). There are a variety of reasons why life expectancies are so much shorter for people with a learning disability and we urge Welsh Government to study them closely.

Two things we would like to raise here are the need to make annual health checks available for all people with a learning disability and the role of diagnostic overshadowing in making it harder for people with a learning disability to access health care. All people with a learning disability aged 14 and over should be able to have an annual health check from their GP. We know that even before the pandemic not everyone eligible for the annual health check was receiving it and that during the Covid-19 pandemic most people with a learning disability in Wales have not been able to have their health checks. In order to prevent long-term health problems for people with a learning disability in Wales we recommend re-introduction of annual health checks as soon as possible and a long-term commitment to make them accessible to anyone who needs them, especially older people with a learning

disability who may have more complex health needs.

Welsh Government should also work to ensure that people with a learning disability, especially older people with a learning disability, receive the appropriate health check-ups and screening programmes (eg breast screening, bowel screening, abdominal aortic aneurysm screening, etc). This means making reasonable adjustments such as producing easy-read information and targeting people with a learning disability specifically for invitations.

People with a learning disability may also struggle to get good health care during all stages of their life due to diagnostic overshadowing and a lack of understanding in how different health conditions might interact with learning disability. More training and awareness is needed among medical professionals to understand the specific ways that people with a learning disability age and what issues they may encounter.

Carers

We welcome the strong support for unpaid carers laid out in the proposal and would like to add a focus on mutual caring relationships in order to make sure people with a learning disability get the support they need as they age.

Poverty

People with a learning disability are on average much poorer than other people in Wales and much less likely to be in paid employment (Beyer 2020). They are also far more likely than other people to report being lonely. Over a lifetime these factors will have a cumulative and compounding effect that Welsh Government must recognise in order to address. Firstly, this must be done through prevention in order to enable people with a learning disability to live healthy and fulfilled lives that will in term make them more resilient (financially, psychologically and socially). Secondly, financial and social support for older people must be developed with the accessibility needs of people with a learning disability in mind to make sure that some of the most vulnerable older people are not left without the right support as they grow older.

Housing

We are happy to see such a strong focus on housing in this proposal. We would like to emphasise the need to look specifically at the housing needs of people with a learning disability and any transitions in their lives. Welsh Government needs to ensure that older people with a learning disability have their often complex support needs met by services for people with a learning disability being accessible to older people and services for older people being accessible to people with a learning disability.

Digital Inclusion

We agree that digital inclusion is very important goal to pursue going forward. Increasing digital literacy is an important goal. In pursuing this Welsh Government must make sure the learning needs of people with a learning disability and neuro-divergent older people have their needs met.

References

Beyer, Stephen (2020): Engage to Change briefing: What policy changes are required

to provide people - <https://www.engagetochange.org.uk/article/what-needs-to-change-to-allow-people-with-a-learning-disability-and-or-asd-equal-access-to-employment/>

Mencap (2018): Information on Health Inequalities - <https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/research-and-statistics/health/health-inequalities>

Williams, Carwyn (2021): Wales needs a clear strategy for tackling wider health inequalities, Learning Disability Wales homepage - <https://www.ldw.org.uk/wales-needs-a-clear-strategy-for-tackling-wider-health-inequalities/>

Question 5: Will the Strategy help to maximise the potential of the growing numbers of older people in our communities?

Comments:

We are very happy to see a strong emphasis on building and retaining people's capabilities and the strong focus on targeting loneliness and isolation.

We are also happy to see a commitment to support older workers and suggest that Welsh Government looks into making supported employment programmes a part of its proposals. Learning Disability Wales is part of the Engage to Change project that has had excellent results with supporting young people with a learning disability into employment. However, the same model has also been used successfully in supporting older people back into the labour market or to manage change.

Question 6: Do you agree with our ambition to work towards an age friendly Wales? If so, please state what you, as an individual or organisation, are doing to help us to create an age friendly Wales.

Comments:

Question 7: How has Covid-19 changed your ability to do things that matter to you, or the way you deliver services to older people?

Comments:

Question 8: How can we involve older people in the re building our communities following the pandemic?

Comments:

Welsh Government review of engagement
Questions for older people

Question 9: Are you a member of a 50+ group or forum? If yes, how successful do you think the forum is influencing local and national policy decisions?

Comments:

Question 10: Does the 50+ forum benefit your local area in other ways? (Eg. by reducing social isolation or building community resilience?)

Comments:

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Question 11: How do you think local and national government can better engage with older people?

Comments:

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Questions for local authorities

Question 12: Does a 50+ Forum still operate in your area? If yes, how successful is it in involving older people in local decision making?

Comments:

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Question 13: Does your 50+ forum benefit your local area in other ways? (Eg. by reducing social isolation or building community resilience?)

Comments:

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Question 14: If a 50+ forum is not active in your local area, how do you engage with older people?

Comments:

Question 15: We would like to know your views on the effects that the *Strategy for an Ageing Society* for would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

Comments:

Question 16: Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy *Strategy for an Ageing Society* could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

Comments:

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Question 17: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

Comments:

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Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: